

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

REPORT NO.

25X1A

COUNTRY

China (Manchuria)

SUBJECT

Income of Priests of the Russian Church
In Manchuria

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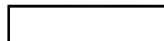
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1. In 1953 approximately 300,000 yuan equalled US\$10. The average amount needed for a priest of the Russian Orthodox Church to subsist [redacted] at that time was about 400,000 yuan, or approximately US\$13. Priests did not receive state salaries. Their salaries varied. On the average, about 150,000 yuan per month were provided by the local church, plus a free dwelling and free heat. The priest's salary was determined by the local church council. The extra 250,000 yuan needed by the priest were earned by performing religious ceremonies, such as marriages. Local churches supported the Eparchy by contributing a certain portion, perhaps five percent, of their income. The Eparchy had no other source of income, except for divorce fees. The income of a local church depended upon the size of the congregation and the wealth or poverty of the district in which the church was located. There were four main sources of income for a local church: (a) monthly contributions from church members, the amount being determined by their ability to contribute, (b) sale of candles, which provided quite a sizeable amount, (c) collections at services, and (d) sale of ceremonial bread. The income from the sale of ceremonial bread was divided equally between the priest and the local church.
2. The priests of the Russian Church in Manchuria were much better off before the Church came under the jurisdiction of the Moscow Patriarchate. This was particularly true prior to 1935. The local Russians were more prosperous. Many of them were employed by the Chinese Eastern Railway. Consequently, they were in a position to contribute generously to the Church. In addition, the Chinese Eastern Railway supported about half of the churches in Manchuria. Most of these were located in the smaller towns [redacted]. The Railway paid 150 gold rubles monthly to each priest assigned to one of its churches. This was true only up to 1926, however, at which time the Soviets took over the Russian interest in the Railway and stopped payment of salaries to priests. The Soviets at that time did not otherwise interfere with the Church.
3. The relative economic position of the Russian clergy [redacted] was quite low. In general, the average priest lived more poorly than the average layman. Some priests repaired watches to supplement their salaries. Others had to repair their own shoes. The present repatriation of Soviet nationals (former emigres) from China to the USSR will increase the economic difficulties facing the priests. [redacted] most of the priests will not accept repatriation, unless the Moscow Patriarchate should offer them specific assignments to parishes in the USSR, in which case they might be tempted.

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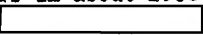


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4. The Moscow Patriarchate did not extend material aid to the  25X1
Eparchy or to its parishes. The Chinese monk, Simeon, who was a bishop
of the Russian Church in Shanghai, received some funds in about 1950
from the Moscow Patriarchate as a goodwill gesture.  25X1A
 The Patriarchate sent
money to the Exarch of the Far East, but only for his administrative
needs and, therefore, no financial aid from Moscow reached the  25X1
Eparchy.

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